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Letter dated 12 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter on the efforts by Belgium and other partners in the sector of the reform and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, in particular, the Congolese army (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Jean **de Ruyt**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Belgium
to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 12 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

12 March 2004

In reference to Security Council resolution 1522 (2004) of 15 January 2004 and the meeting on the reform of the security sector in the Democratic Republic of the Congo held at United Nations Headquarters on 9 February 2004, I have the honour to confirm to you that Belgium responded immediately to the appeal to support the reform of the army in the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed by the Council to the international community.

Within the framework of a military partnership with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Belgium conducts close and in-depth consultations with the Minister of Defence and the new general staff of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These consultations have taken place at the request of the Congolese military authorities. They are conducted in complete transparency with our international partners as well as the United Nations. They have, inter alia, made it possible to formulate a conceptual plan for the new integrated Congolese army during the strategic discussion that took place in Kinshasa in November 2003. An initial follow-up meeting was organized in Kinshasa at the end of January 2004 in order to refine the plan.

Aware that the reform of the army is closely linked to the demobilization and economic and social integration of the former combatants, Belgium also consults the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the secretariat of the Multinational Demobilization and Reintegration Programme and the World Bank in order to make it possible to set-up disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes as speedily as possible.

At the same time, Belgium acceded to the explicit request by the Congolese Minister of Defence to train an initial integrated brigade (made up of three battalions). This brigade is being trained in peacekeeping operations according to current standards. The training of the first battalion began on 9 February 2004 in Kisangani.

Within the framework of this work, Belgium has always advocated the participation of other partners from the international community. To date, firm commitments have been received from France, which is already participating in the training. Other countries are considering the possibility of participating in this operation.

While reiterating its total commitment to peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Central Africa in general, Belgium confirms, through this letter, its particular support for the reform of the security sector both in its definition of the conceptual plans as well as in the execution of specific operations.

(*Signed*) Jean **de Ruyt**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Belgium
to the United Nations